

Senator Needleman
Representative Arconti
Members of the Energy and Technology Committee

I write about my concern for the evident lack of safety in the design of the UI delivery system as revealed by storm Isaias.

UI completed the upgrading of its delivery structures in my area earlier this year. This whole part of Hamden is now on the 14k primary system. The tree work and the poles and wiring have been up to date.

Isaias brought down a large piece from one of my trees. It ended up resting on the primary (and other, lower wires) and the ground. The primary was also in contact with the metal of the street light. The primary remained energised.

At the corner of Hartford Turnpike and Killdeer, a piece of an oak tree brought down the three wires of a three phase circuit. Those wires remained energized for hours (maybe more than a day), burning holes in the asphalt. I stayed far away while this was live, but here is a picture of one of them taken later, showing the base of a pole, for scale.



While I did not see this, I understand there was a similar situation in North Haven in which the downed wires ignited a gas fire.

My first concern is that the safety systems in these three events, and probably others, failed. The circuits should have turned off automatically. UI had people promptly on the scene shown above, but even they were not able to turn off the power.

The upside of this lack of safety is that perhaps a hundred houses did have electrical service for the three days before the power was turned off, the tree people arrived and the repairs were made.

So in sum, I am concerned that the installed delivery system does not provide effective safety. Beyond that, by its very nature, a system that depends on above ground wiring is highly vulnerable to storm damage. We know that due to climate change, the next decades will be characterized by more frequent, high intensity storms. It is time to rethink and redesign the entirety of our electrical service.

Sincerely,
Ralph Jones
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